



# MONSOON MAYHEM: HIMACHAL & UTTARAKHAND GRAPPLE WITH UNRELENTING FLOODS AND DISASTERS

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The Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are enduring one of the most punishing monsoon seasons in recent memory. From late June into mid-July 2025, torrential rains, relentless cloudbursts, flash floods, and catastrophic landslides have badly damaged and disturbed life in both states. In a matter of days, vital infrastructure has crumbled, lives have been lost, and entire communities have been left cut off and scrambling for survival as rivers burst their banks and mountain slopes gave way under the relentless downpour.

This is not a natural disaster in isolation. It is a troubling reminder of the growing climate vulnerability of India's hill states places where fragile ecosystems, unregulated development, and the accelerating impacts of global warming collide with deadly consequences.

## Himachal Pradesh: A State Under Siege

Between June 20 and July 13, 2025, Himachal Pradesh has been battered by a deadly sequence of natural disasters:

31 flash floods, 22 cloudbursts, 17 landslides

The devastation has claimed at least 92 lives, including 56 directly from rain-related calamities and 41 from road accidents on crumbling, rain-damaged highways. An additional 40 people remain missing, and hundreds more have been injured.

Mandi district has emerged as the epicenter of the catastrophe. With over 150 roads blocked some entirely washed away power and water supplies crippled, and homes and public structures collapsing, the region is struggling to restore even basic services. The first floor of a national bank in Thunag submerged completely, symbolizing the sheer intensity of the disaster.

Yet amid the devastation, stories of survival and courage have surfaced. In Syathi village, a dog's persistent, urgent barking at midnight warned villagers just in time to escape an approaching flash flood. In Seraj valley, a young woman buried under landslide debris managed to dig herself out over five harrowing hours before rescuers could reach her.

Rainfall data has been equally staggering. The state has already received 33% above average

rainfall between June 1 and July 8, with Mandi witnessing over double its normal rainfall in just two weeks. According to meteorological reports, Shimla district saw 89% excess rainfall, and Una district recorded an 86% surplus.

The property damage bill has crossed ₹770 crore, with over 450 homes either damaged or completely destroyed, alongside bridges, schools, and utility services.

### **Uttarakhand: Caught in a Rising Tide**

Neighboring Uttarakhand has fared little better. Since June 1, over 20 people have lost their lives, and nine remain missing. Cloudbursts in Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts have triggered deadly landslides and flash floods, washing away houses, roads, and lives.

On one ominous day, a sudden cloudburst in Mukh village, Chamoli swept away homes, left workers missing, and prompted emergency deployments of the SDRF. In Uttarkashi, two construction laborers were killed while seven others disappeared as landslides ravaged a makeshift shelter along the Yamunotri highway. Rivers across the region have surged ominously, with the Alaknanda in Rudraprayag swelling so dramatically that it submerged a towering riverside Shiva idol, a visual metaphor for the overwhelming force of nature.

Flood alerts have been issued for 11 districts, and landslide warnings remain in effect across four. The situation forced the suspension of the famed Char Dham Yatra, leaving thousands of pilgrims stranded as rockslides cut off access to holy shrines and towns. In Kumaon, over 40,000 residents are affected by the rain-triggered chaos, with dozens of major roads rendered impassable.

### **A Dangerous New Normal**

What's unfolding in Himachal and Uttarakhand isn't a one-off tragedy. Climate change is intensifying monsoon patterns, with more frequent cloudbursts and flash floods battering already fragile hill slopes. Decades of deforestation, unchecked construction, and unregulated hydropower projects have further weakened the region's resilience.

Experts warn this pattern will only worsen unless urgent, science-based planning, stricter environmental safeguards, and climate-resilient infrastructure become priorities for these vulnerable Himalayan states.

### **Relief, Recovery — and the Road Ahead**

Rescue teams from the NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, and Army continue to battle difficult terrain to reopen highways, restore water and electricity, and deliver essential supplies. Thousands of people remain in temporary shelters, while medical teams and drones aid in search and relief efforts.

But while immediate relief is critical, the long-term priority must be building climate resilience. Experts urge stricter environmental clearances, scientific risk assessments before development, slope stabilization, better early warning systems, and regulated hydropower projects. Sustainable tourism, decentralized energy, and land restoration must shape future planning for these fragile hill states.

### **Courage in the Hills, Action from the Nation**

The people of Himachal and Uttarakhand are showing remarkable resilience — rebuilding homes, clearing farms, and restoring lives. Their courage deserves more than applause. It demands urgent, climate-smart action from governments and policymakers. Because with climate extremes becoming routine, preparedness, not luck, will decide how well these hills and their people endure the storms ahead.

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